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Minutes

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FACULTY SENATE MINUTES FOR 18 MARCH 2014

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Note: These minutes are not a complete verbatim transcript of the Senate meeting.

- I. Call to Order by Chair Grant Sterling at 2:01pm (Booth Library, Room 4440)** Present: J. Ashley, T. Burns, J. Conwell, M. Dao, S. Knight-Davis, J. Ludlow, A. Methven, M. Mulvaney, J. Ochwa-Echel, J. Oliver, K. Padmaraju, S. Scher, G. Sterling, K. English.

Guests: Provost Lord, Dean Jackman (CEPS), Dr. Stephen Lucas (CAA), Dr. Rebecca Throneburg (CAA), Jason Howell (DEN)

II. Approval of Minutes of February 25, 2014

Minutes from the February 25, 2014 meeting were approved. Motion made by Senator Conwell and seconded by Senator Ludlow. Senators Ochwa-Echel, Bruns and Ashley abstained.

III. Announcements

Senator Sterling made an announcement about the Faculty Senate/UPI Faculty Retirees Reception on April 23rd at 3:30 pm at the Tarble Arts Center.

IV. Communications

- a. CAA Minutes from 2/20/14 – No action needed
- b. CAA Minutes from 2/27/14 – No action needed
- c. CAA Agenda (revised) for 3/6/14 – No action needed
- d. Approval of Election Slate – Presented later during the Elections Committee report.

V. Presentation to the Senate: Rebecca Throneburg and Stephen Lucas, CAA

Dr. Lucas and Dr. Throneburg shared the current draft of the syllabus policy that CAA was planning to adopt. Dr. Lucas mentioned that this policy was one of the actions being taken by CAA based on an initiative that the CAA had been working on for the past 5 years. The primary objective of the CAA for looking into syllabi was to see how learning objectives were being used. He added that a large number of faculty weren't aware that there was a syllabus policy already in place and that syllabi needed to be housed in each department. There were some departments who had regular reviews while there were many departments which didn't. In support of improving the learning outcomes, CAA has undertaken this after they have approved a credit hour policy. Senator Ashley asked how much of this policy was like taking the Common Core approach to higher education. Dr. Lucas replied that the state's interest with the common core was that it has retched up the expectations for high school students. IBHE wants to build on that, rather than replicating what now will be covered in high schools. So, in essence, a P-20 curriculum that builds on previous learning is what is expected from IBHE. Dr. Throneburg mentioned that while we may be looking at common core, these revisions are not based on those but rather on our learning goals. Dr. Lucas added that the revision was independent of the common core. Senator Ashley commented that if we have these learning objectives, why do we need to have a syllabus policy and not let the departments do it; why is it necessary to have a uniform syllabus policy rather than leave the departments to make decisions about their syllabi. Dr. Throneburg replied that the review policy was not that all syllabi need to be sent to CAA but that faculty within departments come together and review their syllabi periodically. The idea

was to have a system to ensure that the syllabi covers what the approved course proposal had intended to. Senator Ashley asked if that meant that faculty had no freedom to change their syllabi. Senator Conwell also added that the use of “learning objectives” seemed like we were in grade school. Provost Lord interjected the discussion to add that with the realities of higher education, we now need to provide evidence of what our students are learning based on what we intended them to. So whether we call them learning objectives or something else, we need to provide evidence that our students are getting what we intend them to from our curriculum. Dr. Lucas added that the CAA was very concerned and feels that we need to position ourselves to be accountable. Currently the CAA is focusing on learning goals, something that does fall under the purview of the CAA; the content is something that is left to the departments. Senator Dao asked if CAA was looking at all courses. Dr. Lucas replied that Eastern has around 2500 courses on the books and there are many courses for which the original course proposals are not available (no one knows where they are). Dr. Throneburg added that the course proposals that are available go back about 20 years, course proposals for courses approved before that are not available. Senator Ashley asked if that meant that we need to create proposals based on current syllabi for those courses. Dr. Lucas reiterated that if we looked at best practices, they advocate a need for refreshing courses as content keeps evolving.

Senator Ludlow asked how this new syllabus policy which was not very different from the old one will address the concerns that CAA has. Dr. Lucas replied that the practice that CAA wants to encourage is that departments should have policies to review curriculum and the implementation of the curriculum. Senator Ludlow added that maybe the current policy needs to be enforced more across all departments which seems to have been an issue. Dr. Lucas stated that a well-crafted syllabus leads to good student learning. Senator Ludlow said that the resistance to this policy seems to be due to the belief that the change will not fix the issue. Dr. Throneburg mentioned that it would be great if there was some kind of handbook for new faculty, mainly because as new faculty come in, they are not aware of the policies in place and draft their syllabi without being aware of the requirements as per our syllabus policy.

Senator Scher noted that the CAA seems to have two goals in mind: to insure that we meet the learning goals and improve student learning; and it is good for accountability. When he saw this syllabus policy, he looked for the original course proposals for the courses he teaches, most of which have been around for more than 40 years, if not more. He can't find the proposals. Senator Scher added that this policy leads to drafting syllabi that may be about 30 pages long. He usually had a short syllabus and a long one for his courses, but he questioned how much do students actually read a long syllabus. He also was concerned that the new policy is not considering the new technologies in place, especially as course management systems are being used by more and more faculty. As we proceed with this, he is very concerned that as a university we are not doing very well with the learning goals, especially with regard to critical thinking. Critical thinking is a crucial goal as students are not going to go into discipline specific careers. If we make a policy that will lead to faculty spending a huge time developing a detailed syllabus which is probably not even going to be read by the students rather than focusing on how they were going to help their students become better at outcomes such as critical thinking. Dr. Throneburg noted that we need to consider that a good syllabus also benefits faculty as it directs them to clarify their own thinking and then talk to colleagues from the same department to review the syllabus. What CAA is finding is that creating a syllabus and periodically review by the department faculty leads to better student outcomes. Considering that the world is changing and the content is at the fingertips of the students, we faculty need to engage our students better. Senator Ashley noted that he liked the way Dr. Throneburg worded the rationale saying that the syllabus was a way of organizing a course. We do need to have a

uniform syllabus policy to improve student learning but not as a policing issue which leads to faculty feeling that they are not being trusted. Dr. Lucas added that if we considered rigor, often times if a faculty decides to increase the rigor in his/her course, and the colleagues who are teaching the same course don't, then it leads to many issues such as this faculty member having fewer students and poorer student evaluations etc. As faculty, we have to understand that with freedom comes responsibility. Dr. Throneburg added that as faculty looks at their course prerequisites, they see what they need to build on. We can't approach our courses on their own but rather as part of the curriculum. Senator Ochwa-Echel noted that it seemed like the department chairs had a role to play in all this. He asked what CAA felt about that. Dr. Lucas replied that speaking as a chair, he knew that some chairs did review each syllabus within their department while some didn't. CAA was planning to meet with the Dean's council to see how the administrative councils could participate in this too.

Senator Ludlow suggested a couple of revisions to the policy: first that it should be made clear that "review" in the policy refers to a departmental review and secondly that the syllabus does reflect what is actually taught in the classroom. As what happens in the classroom is what impacts student learning and not necessarily what is stated in the syllabus. Dr. Lucas added that the faculty should consider that improving student learning is a joint effort and this syllabus policy is one piece of the drive to improve student learning. Senator Sterling expressed concerns that faculty may see this policy as being too specific and may not see it as an attempt from CAA to have faculty collaborating and reviewing syllabi to improve student learning. He was afraid that the good part of the message may be lost with such a specific policy. He suggested making the intent clear with the policy. Dr. Lucas replied that it was a good suggestion and noted that CAA will come up with some statements to set up the context and make the intent clear to faculty. Senator Ashley asked what the next step was to be – are we going to be talking about best practices related to how to teach. Senator Mulvaney commented that as an institution we are driven by providing cutting edge curriculum and as we faculty are doing this, we need to see how we can validate that we are providing innovative experiences for our students. To him, CAA is the body that needs to take leadership by example. He appreciated the approach being taken by CAA to look at current policies and revising those after careful review. So, by example, CAA is encouraging departments to do the same. He commended the CAA for taking this initiative. Senator Ashley noted that CAA is probably looking at this from many different perspectives. Dr. Lucas added that CAA didn't intend that all the syllabi need to look alike but that they need to include the basic ten things that are listed in the policy. Dr. Throneburg added that CAA is also looking into streamlining the course proposal form. Senator Ashley noted that he felt that faculty was looking at CAA as a policing body. Dr. Lucas noted that CAA realizes that and is trying to change the faculty perspective. Senator Methven added that the CAA sessions on learning goals have been very good and that as an elected body they were really engaging faculty in these important discussions. Senator Oliver suggested putting the justification and rationale statements at the top in the policy and added that he liked that CAA was not telling faculty what learning objectives they need to have but rather is encouraging them to determine the learning objectives for each of the courses at the departmental level. This provides a good structure.

VI. Old Business

A. Committee Reports

1. Executive Committee – No report
2. Nominations Committee – Senator Knight-Davis shared a list of positions for which nominations will be sought this year. She asked the Senate if she should go ahead and put out the call or wait till the elections were over. Senator Sterling suggested waiting till the elections were done.

3. Elections Committee: Senator Oliver passed out the election slate and thanked all the senators for their support in finalizing the list of candidates. He noted that while he was looking at the by-laws, he had seen that faculty could not serve on more than one of some of these elected bodies. But currently, there were faculty who were doing that and in the upcoming elections also, there were candidates who had put in their names for more than one of the elected bodies mentioned in the by-laws. He asked if anyone knew about the history of this kind of issue. Senator Bruns asked if it was really an issue that the same people are serving. Because it wasn't as if they were not allowing others to run, as we have been having problems getting enough people to run for each of the positions. Considering this, he suggested amending the policy. Senator Methven added that as a member of the election committee, he didn't see a problem in not adhering to this bye-law as we struggle to populate the committees. Senator Scher expressed reluctance with revoking the bye-law and added that we needed a 2/3 majority vote unless there was a referendum. Within 30 days of the policy revision, if there wasn't a faculty referendum then we could revoke the policy. But since we don't have that much time, he was concerned. Senator Ochwa-Echel said that in reading the policy he felt that if a faculty member was serving on more than one of these bodies due to an appointment and not as an elected member, he didn't see it as a problem.

Senator Bruns asked if this bye-law was a good idea considering the difficulty we had in getting candidates to run for each of the positions. Shouldn't we consider taking this bye-law off. Senator Ashley replied that he didn't see this bye-law as good or bad but the thing is that [people who are willing to serve are not able to. He did see a possibility of opening up the positions for more people. Senator Sterling noted that if we did not want to eliminate the bye-law, then either we can enforce it or temporarily suspend it. Senator Ashley asked if we had this conversation a few years back. Senator Conwell asked if we got more candidates after the deadline being extended and all the senators renewing their efforts. Senator Oliver said that there were 12 candidates that were added after those efforts. Senator Conwell suggested that Faculty Senate and CAA not overlap, these two bodies are powerful committees and an overlap of members in these two committees should not be encouraged. He suggested that if we start recruiting earlier, we may be more successful in securing candidates for each of the positions. He stated that he was in favor of suspending the bye-law for now. Senator Methven noted that he didn't want the by-laws to be revised one at a time, but rather that all of them should be looked at collectively before any revisions are made. So, he would rather suspend the bye-law for now, especially if we already have candidates who are running for more than one of these bodies. Senator Mulvaney stated that he understands the rationale for the policy that it may be there to protect faculty from overextending themselves. He was leaning more towards suspending the bye-law for now. Senator Scher noted that there is a process and that a subcommittee was looking into the bye-laws but that there was no policy regarding suspension of by-laws. Senator Bruns noted that it would be better if more faculty served, but it was strange that three of us senators are going to be on the Senate and CFR. Senator Conwell asked how many positions were like that and if it was possible to ask candidates to choose one or the other. Senator Sterling replied that in the current list, we had two such candidates. Senator Oliver wasn't too comfortable asking them to choose. Senator Scher again said that by-laws were meant to be followed.

Senator Mulvaney moved that Marita Gronwell's name will be taken off the list, Amy Rosenstein can run for both the committees (Faculty Senate and CFR) but will be able to

serve on only one. Senator Knight-Davis seconded the motion and the motion carried through with a majority vote. Senators Conwell and Scher abstained from the vote.

4. Faculty-Student Relations Committee – No report
5. Faculty-Staff Relations Committee – Senator Mulvaney reported that he had attended the Staff Senate meeting recently and they were having conversations about pension. He noted that they wanted to do an informal recognition of people who were doing a great job explaining this process to staff and faculty
6. Awards Committee – Senator Dao announced that there were six nominations he received for the Distinguished Faculty Award, most of which came through the Friday before Spring Break. He was pleased to announce that Dr. Andrew Methven was selected by the committee. Senator Scher moved that this selection be approved by the Senate, Senator Ashley seconded the motion and the motion carried through unanimously with one abstention from Senator Methven.
7. Faculty Forum Committee – No report
8. Budget Transparency Committee – No report
9. Committee on Committees – No report
10. Constitution/By-laws Revision – No report
11. Other Reports
 - a. Provost's Report - Provost Lord commended the Senate for the selected candidate for the Distinguished Faculty Award. He also thanked the Senate for engaging in the conversations with CAA about student learning. He said that it was a good discussion and he liked the role CAA and the Senate were playing in this discussion. He reported that there had been a clear consensus from the Search committee for the Director of Admissions position but when the offer was made to the candidate, he declined. The other candidates were not deemed to fit what the search committee was looking for, so the search has been extended. He said that he would shortly be making an announcement for the Registrar position. He mentioned the presentation being made by the Enrollment Work the next day and encouraged all to attend to see how each of us could help. A draft of the NCA accreditation report would be available soon and Dean Augustine wanted it to be out in April. He encouraged everyone to read the draft report.
 - b. Other –

B. Other Old Business:

VII. New Business

A. Future Agenda:

Spring 2014 Meeting Dates – April 1 (e-portfolios); April 15 (CUPB-Program Analysis); April 29 (Admissions)

- B. Other New Business – Senator Bruns announced that Booth Library was in the running for an award and encouraged everyone to visit the Facebook page for Booth library. Senator Oliver announced that if anyone knew of candidates seeking to get elected by 10 write-in votes, he would like them to pass on the information so all of us could consider voting for such candidates.

VIII. Adjournment – Senate adjourned at 4:05 pm.